

Drama bridges the gap

An innovative drama club is bringing together boys from JLS with youngsters from two nearby schools in the maintained sector. Pupils from the Whitefriars and Cedars Middle schools in Harrow meet in the drama studio at JLS every Wednesday, where they have the opportunity to develop their acting skills.

The after-school initiative – a pioneering example of an independent school sharing resources with state schools – was set up by JLS's high-flying Director of Drama, Miss Deborah Gibbs.

"We have such great facilities here, and such talent among our own students, that we really wanted to share them with the wider community," said Miss Gibbs, who was an Advanced Skills Teacher and Head of Drama & Dance at Mill Hill County High School in Barnet before joining JLS.

"We generally get between 16 and 40 11-year-olds here each week. We work on a variety of themes and techniques – their favourite is definitely improvisation. Some of our older boys come along to help out, and they enjoy it tremendously."



At the moment, only the two middle schools are involved but it is eventually hoped to extend the initiative to involve other local schools. "I am a great believer in independent/state school partnerships," said the Headmaster, Mr Kevin Riley. "Drama here is excellent, and I am delighted that we are therefore able to add something to other local schools through this project. At the same time, there are big benefits for our own boys, because they gain tremendously through giving up their time to work with the other children. It gives them insight into the wider community around them and makes them appreciate the advantages of their own School."



Views from the Inside

My name's **Matthew Keliris-Thomas**, I'm 12 and I've been at the school since September. I was a late applicant and it all happened quite quickly. I heard about The John Lyon School from my next-door neighbour who came. I just liked it when I came here; it felt nice. The teachers were all friendly. Now I'm here, I love all the ICT stuff: we do Excel, use loads of different Microsoft software and we even do art in ICT. My favourite teacher is definitely Mr Ratineckx, who teaches geography. The food's good. We're not allowed to eat junk: only on Friday's we get a treat – like fish and chips or something. I like music, I've been learning sax for about a year – I play at school and at home. My main hobby, though, is computer games – I'm really into strategy and fantasy games. The only thing I'd change about the school is the stairs – there are too many!

I'm **Prin Sbasibaran** and I'm 12, too. I came here in September – before, I was at Perivale Primary. I came here because my older brother Jatnu was already here. I was really happy to come, because he's said so many good things about the school. I knew that there were good sports facilities here, and that was a big thing for me. I also like the language lab and the library – there's a good selection of books. My favourite subject is probably art, and my favourite teacher is Mr Westlake, who teaches Religious Studies. I reckon the younger teachers are nicer; some of the old ones are quite loud! I play

football for the A team, and I'm in the Middlesex U-12 cricket squad. I've been playing for nearly five years. I don't really know what I'll do when I leave school. It's a long way off, but I would probably like to do something that is to do with sport.



THE STANDARD

The John Lyon School Newsletter

Spring 2005



Aiming for Excellence

Where's the Vision?

By Kevin Riley, Headmaster

At the end of my first term at The John Lyon School I can state without hesitation that this is a very good school, writes the Headmaster, Mr Kevin Riley.

There is an enormous amount of good practice going on here, a fact which was confirmed by our very positive inspection report, published during the Spring Term.

Importantly, there is no conflict at JLS between academic achievement and a wider view of education: we believe that it is both desirable and eminently possible to provide, on the one hand, a strongly academic education, and, on the other, a programme full of exciting extra-curricular opportunities.

An exemplar of what the School is seeking to achieve can be seen in the recent production of *Anything Goes*, which was not only highly professional, but also great fun and offered lots of opportunities to our students.

The challenge now is to turn a very good school into an excellent school. Quite simply, we are aiming for excellence.

The Government's response to Sir Mike Tomlinson's long-awaited report on 14-19 education has probably been the biggest education story in the media in recent months.

I share the general disappointment in the teaching profession that a very thorough and wide-ranging report drawn up over two years should apparently have been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. Given the level of detail in the Tomlinson report, it is frankly very disappointing to see the degree of vagueness in some crucial areas of the Government's resulting White Paper.

Much has been made of the reception the new Education Secretary, Ruth Kelly, received at the Secondary Heads' Association (SHA) conference shortly after publication of the White Paper. I represent independent schools on the SHA National Council, so I was present at the conference and I can state that she was not jeered, as some reports suggested.

However, it is certainly true that the delegates were dismayed to see the Secretary of State demonstrate such a shallow and superficial understanding of some key issues. In fact, it was a very unconvincing performance from a senior politician in the presumed run-up to a General Election.

At The John Lyon School, we will obviously continue to do what we do best – enabling our students to perform well at A level and to win places at good universities – but it is nonetheless worrying to see such a lack of educational vision at the top of Government.



In pursuit of this aim, we are working hard at developing a Strategic Plan for the School. The Senior Management Team and governors have had three meetings, and we are beginning to develop a very effective strategic way forward.

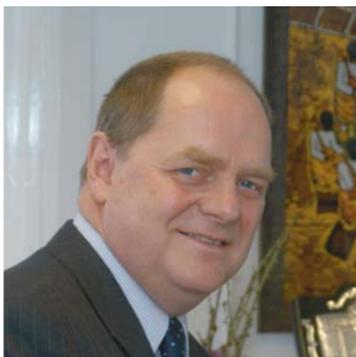
Looking to the future, I would personally like to see the development of more independent learning at The John Lyon School. I am also keen for JLS to develop stronger international links.

I have already met a considerable number of current and prospective parents of pupils, as well as Old Lyonians and other friends of the School. I look forward to meeting many more in the coming months.

In the meantime, I hope you will enjoy reading **The Standard**, our new termly newsletter.

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Teacher Profile – Mr Spencer Leach

The John Lyon School has always prided itself on its high level of sports provision – and the good news is that it has recently got even better! Spencer Leach is a very new addition to the staff, having joined in January as Director of Sport from his post as Head of Education at Fulham Football Club's Youth Academy.

"I always considered myself more of a teacher than a coach," says Mr Leach. "What I like about The John Lyon School is that despite the fact that its current range of sport is really very good, it's still looking to extend and improve. Striving for excellence is definitely part of the culture here." Football and cricket are the main sports, but basketball, tennis, badminton, gymnastics, swimming and athletics are all pursued with enthusiasm at JLS. "That's what really impresses me about the School," says Mr Leach. "All the boys, no matter what their level of ability, are keen to take part in sport. I don't have to chivy or persuade: they all want to get involved."

Mr Leach attained a degree in Sports Studies from Brunel University. He spent a year in New York developing soccer with young people, before returning to the UK to complete a PGCE at Exeter University. After working at a school in Hastings, he did a two-year stint at an English school in Rome. Next he completed a Masters degree in Sports Psychology from Exeter while working in Richmond upon Thames. He joined Fulham Football Club and was Head of Education there for five years.

- Mr Leach is married to Amanda, who is a teacher in Knightsbridge. They have an 11-month-old daughter called Alisia – "I think she's going to be a professional golfer," said Mr Leach, who likes to spend as much time as possible with his family. "I used to play a lot of sport. Now I tend to find that I'm spending more time watching, but sport remains a great passion of mine."



Mathematical Achievement

The School's Head of Mathematics, Mr Bill Waite, has been involved in the production of the definitive International GCSE (IGCSE) mathematics text book. The text book will come into circulation for students preparing for examination in June 2006. The IGCSE was originally established for overseas students, but recent changes in the GCSE specification at home have seen increasing numbers of independent schools turning towards the IGCSE as an alternative. "Many teachers believe that the normal GCSE has far too much emphasis on statistics, that the curriculum is unwieldy and that the coursework is far too time-consuming" says Mr Waite.

The IGCSE differs from conventional GCSEs mainly in having no coursework. It is purely based on examination, with two or three extra topics to replace coursework. "It is a much better preparation for A Level Maths," added Mr Waite. "At The John Lyon School more than half the sixth formers go on to take A Level Maths – last year 90% achieved passes at grades A and B. The figures speak for themselves." Mr Waite was one of a team of four involved in writing the new text book. He has no time to rest on his laurels, as he is already working on Book 2.

"Good Teaching" & "Rich Opportunities" for Pupils at The John Lyon School, say Inspectors

Inspectors have praised the "many strengths" of The John Lyon School in a glowing report. The team from the Independent Schools Inspectorate found that boys achieved good standards and received a "fulfilling education".

The report, which followed the inspectors' visit in November 2004, was published in the spring term. Its publication came just a few weeks after the new Headmaster, Mr Kevin Riley, joined the School in January. "I am delighted that the inspectors have recognised both our high academic standards and the excellent work we do to help our pupils grow into rounded individuals and good citizens," said Mr Riley. "Our challenge now is to build on this success and ensure we continue to offer a great education for all our boys."

Dr Owain Arwel Hughes OBE, Chairman of the school's governing body, also welcomed the inspectors' findings: "The governors are delighted to have received such a positive report. The challenges ahead are clear, and we shall rise to them."



The inspectors' report highlighted a number of areas for praise at the School:

- *Above-average standards achieved in public examinations*
- *"Good teaching" from "hard-working, dedicated staff"*
- *"Its very caring pastoral structure"*
- *"A secure, well-managed environment"*
- *"Very good links with its parents"*
- *"A strong sense of well-integrated community with its varied ethnic mix of pupils"*
- *"Rich opportunities for spiritual, moral, cultural and social growth"*.

Among a small number of areas recommended for further action in the inspection report were "certain parts of the accommodation".

Mr Riley said that improving all aspects of the School's accommodation, particularly the Red House (the Sixth Form centre, pictured below), was a priority.



*Copies of the report are available from the School on request or it can be viewed at:

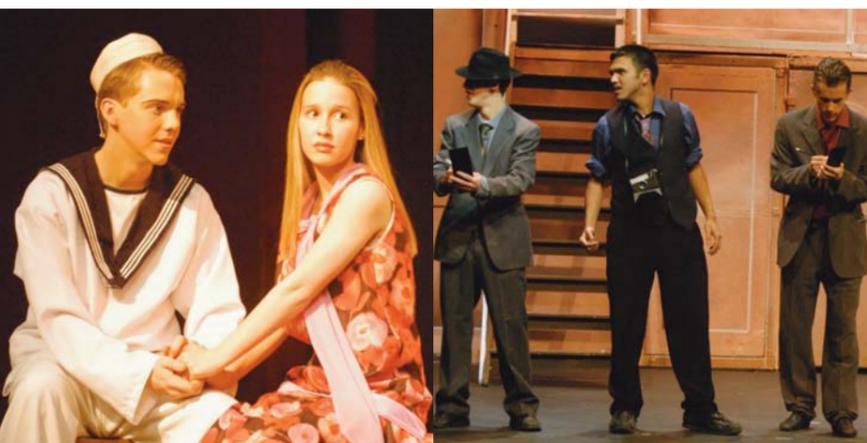
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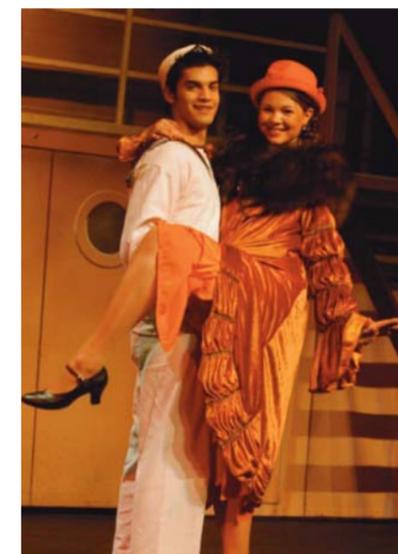
Anything Goes – a Dramatic Triumph!



Snatching a break:
Miss Deborah Gibbs
at the dress rehearsal



The lavish Easter production of Cole Porter's much-loved musical, *Anything Goes*, marked another triumph for The John Lyon School's drama and music departments. Nearly 1,200 people packed into Harrow School's impressive Ryan Theatre over three nights and enjoyed great singing and superb acting from the 50-strong cast. "Our Director of Drama, Deborah Gibbs, together with our Director of Music, Jo Rowley Jones, and everyone else involved did a fantastic job. Not only was it great fun, but the whole production was thoroughly professional," said the Headmaster, Mr Kevin Riley. The 25 JLS boys and 25 girls from local schools were well supported by a further 25 boys and 10 members of staff involved in front-of-house activities, lighting and other back-stage duties. Auditions began in November 2004 and there was then a full term of rehearsals, building up until they were held every evening and weekend. It was a gruelling schedule, although care was taken to make sure pupils were not overwhelmed. Miss Gibbs explained why she chose *Anything Goes* for this year's production. "It is such out-and-out fun that it made a good contrast to last year's show, *West Side Story*, which obviously was much darker." She added that there had been no problem in persuading girls to join the production: "When we staged our first big musical, *Guys and Dolls*, I had to ring round the local girls' schools and it was quite tough to get any involved. But that show was such a success that since then these schools have started ringing me to ask if they could be involved in our next production."



Murder at JLS!

The John Lyon School passed another milestone this term, with the production of its first feature-length film.

The film, based on playwright Giles Cooper's "Unman, Wittering and Zigo", was the brainchild of English teacher Mr Dom Roy and pupil Eliot Haigh. Auditions took place in the first week of September, after which 20 children and seven staff spent at least six hours a week working on the project over a six-month period.

"The play is about a teacher's experience at a school," said Mr Roy. "It charts the teacher's gradual decline into disillusionment as he comes to understand that his disruptive and abusive pupils have actually murdered his predecessor!"

Sixteen-year-old Eliot Haigh shot the film with a Panasonic camera, then edited it on professional Avid equipment. "I'm very interested in film-making and eventually I would like to work in film, perhaps as a director or film editor," he said.



- The film is to be premiered at The John Lyon School's drama studio on Friday 29 April, followed by screenings at the Boyd Campbell Hall on 3-5 May. Tickets are available from the start of the Summer Term from the studio box office.



JLS Boys To Hit the Air Waves

A play written and performed by English A-level students from the School has been accepted by the BBC for broadcast on One World digital radio.

"Beef" was written during a week-long workshop at the Arfon Writing Centre in Shropshire. "The instructors there are all professional radio scriptwriters, and as the week progressed the boys were given increasingly complex situations to develop," said Mr Jim McLeod, an English teacher at JLS.

"We were given a situation in which a father out shopping with his two sons in a supermarket was assaulted," said 18-year-old Daniel Winkler. "We had to create characters and write monologues which were then intercut. We wrote in seven main characters. By Thursday night, we had recorded it, and it was then edited next day by a professional, so we had our finished product," said 18-year-old Rabeem Jivraj. "It was a great opportunity to get an insight into what is actually involved in the whole process of producing a radio play."

"This is obviously a wonderful achievement by our boys," said Headmaster Mr Kevin Riley. "Drama is one of the areas in which The John Lyon School clearly excels, and we are always seeking opportunities for our pupils to produce work of the highest level." No broadcast date has yet been set for the play.



Top Tennis Team

The Year 9 tennis team had an outstanding success when they reached the quarter-finals of the South East Regional Nestlé BSTA tournament. The team [pictured below l-r Myles Golding, Robert Rowland, Alex Golding, Sam Deacon and Matthew Lee] beat



the JFS school in the London Semi-Finals and Langley Park School in the London Final. "This is the best tennis result that The John Lyon School has ever achieved in this age group: many congratulations to everyone on the team," said teacher Mr Dom Roy.

Congratulations, too, to the Year 10 team: Avinash Murthy, Stuart Childs, Daniel Goldstone, James Sellu, Neil Ewington and Luke Hurst. They were narrowly beaten by St Paul's School in the London Regional Final.

News in Brief

JLS raises £8,000 for Charity

Pastoral Deputy Headmaster Mr David Rimmer (left) presented £8,000 to Lloyd Scott, fundraiser extraordinaire for the Children with Leukaemia charity. This magnificent sum was raised in a series of activities at JLS. Lloyd's adventures include running the London Marathon in a diving suit and cycling across Australia on a penny-farthing.



Out of Africa

Among recent visitors to JLS was Godfrey Kiganga, Principal of Lords Meade Vocational College in Uganda. Mr Kiganga, whose visit was hosted by the Headmaster, was a special guest at the UK Secondary Heads' Association spring conference.

Meet a Governor – Mr Paul Harrison

The Standard: How long have you been a governor of The John Lyon School?

Paul R Harrison: The Chairman of Governors invited me on board in the autumn of 2003. I understand he approached me because of my business background in City banking and also because I am an Old Lyonian (1964-70). I genuinely consider it a huge privilege to be a governor at The John Lyon School.



The Standard: What motivates you to help the School in this way?

PRH: JLS has always been a very special school and it remains so today, with a personal, family atmosphere and a caring, pastoral side that other schools just don't have. The School has always looked to develop the strengths of the individual, rather than making the individual fit into some pre-determined model. I hope that my contribution will help maintain this tradition.

The Standard: What are your responsibilities?

PRH: I am Chairman of the Strategic Committee. As the name suggests, this is responsible for strategy and, currently, for drawing up a new Strategic Plan for the School. This means we have had to look at what we do well, those things we could do better and what opportunities and threats there are to our future success. Now we are focusing on what we want to look like in three to five years' time, and then we will produce detailed plans to get us there.

I am also Chairman of the Development Committee. We are currently in the throes of setting up a development office and are looking for a suitable candidate to fill this position. The aim is to bring the old boys' and parents' associations closer to the School. Of course, part of our intention is to bring in financial resources through alumni and friends of the School, but to do this we need the right long-term approach. I want the School to develop almost a cradle-to-grave relationship with pupils. By that I mean that we begin marketing to families well before they arrive here; we nurture a relationship with boys while they are actually pupils; then after their departure we maintain that relationship throughout their adult lives.

Thirdly, I am Chairman of the Commercial Trading Committee, which is about making better use of the School's resources when they are not being used by our pupils, not least so that we can keep future increases in fees to a minimum. To date, the School has done this only in a very limited way. Now, for example, we are putting the finishing touches to holding a summer school and looking at offering art classes to parents and local residents in the evening during the week.

- "The most important thing in my life is my family," says Paul, who is married to Julie and has two sons: Oliver, aged 14, and Jack, who is six. "I am so grateful to my parents for encouraging me to go to The John Lyon School, so incredibly proud that my elder son, Oliver, was successful in his application to join the School last year and is enjoying it so much, and hopeful that Jack, who is a pupil at a local feeder school, will, in due course, want to continue the family tradition!"

Paul formerly played rugby for Wasps, Middlesex and London Counties, and still follows the game closely. In addition, he is a keen golfer and enjoys cricket. He retains a number of business interests.